DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 327 884 CS 507 362

AUTHOR Go, Mae Jean
TITLE Organizational and Communication Strategies as Responses to Change: Continuing Education Programs in Corporate Settings.
PUB DATE Nov 90
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (76th, Chicago, IL, November 1-4, 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Colleges; *Continuing Education; *Corporate Education; *Nontraditional Education; *Organizational Communication; *Organizational Development; Postsecondary Education; Reentry Students; School Business Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Communication Strategies; *Corporate Culture

ABSTRACT

Upon the breakup of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company in 1984, one of its component parts, Pacific Bell, utilized a number of organizational and communication strategies in responding to the change. The company formed the Telesis Management Institute in 1985 with the mandate to provide educational directions and navigate the changes in corporate culture. One element of the institute, known as Self-Directed Education, has as a primary purpose the provision of educational degree and certificate programs on company premises. The effort includes accelerated degree programs and a "gateway" program designed to provide a strong foundation for math and English skills at the pre-college level. Furthermore, Self-Directed Education offers interpersonal educational consulting and performance development discussions between employee and supervisor. There is daily collaboration among the corporation, colleges, and universities. Since the introduction of the program, employee participation has increased sharply, and employees are bringing new skills and knowledge to the corporation. (SG)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED327884

ORGANIZATIONAL AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AS RESPONSES TO CHANGE: CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN CORPORATE SETTINGS

by

Mae Jean Go, Ph.D.*

Pacific Bell

Telesis Management Institute

Self-Directed Education

2600 Camino Ramon, Room 2N400-M

San Ramon, CA 94583

(415) 823-5983

Applied Communication Section

Speech Communication Association

SCA Convention, November 1990

*The author acknowledges contributions from her colleagues in Pacific Bell: Constance Beutel, Michael Carey, and Kathleen Mitchell.

CS507362

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Mae Jean Go

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Introduction

Change has become inevitable in the American corporate environment. As Bridges notes in his opening chapter of *Surviving Corporate Transition*, "Change has always been a disruptive force in human affairs, but its effects have never been so widespread, continuous, and deep as they are today. We live in an overnight society where organizations appear and disappear like toadstools." (1988, p. 3) Acknowledging change and creating effective strategies to respond to change, however, have distinguished one company from another and frequently determined whether a company will survive and thrive in that environment. A central strategy for surviving change is the building of the necessary knowledge and skills an employee needs to respond to change. For many corporations, those knowledge and skills have been provided via formal education programs and necessitated collaboration between corporations and education providers, namely, colleges and universities.

One such company making the transition from monopoly to a new competitive environment was Pacific Bell in 1984. This paper describes some of the organizational and communication strategies Pacific Bell has utilized over the past 5 years in responding to change by creating innovative continuing education programs that have impacted the collaboration among the corporation, colleges, and universities in California.

The description of Pacific Bell

The breakup of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company in 1984 and the simultaneous entry into a new competitive environment underscored

the critical need to transition individuals from skill-based to knowledge-based work. As one of the seven Regulated Bell Operating Companies formed as a result of divestiture, Pacific Bell is a major telecommunications company and the largest private employer in California. The movement from the monopolistic structure providing basic telephone service to the new competitive environment consisting of many telecommunications providers has highlighted the rapid changes in technology and corporate culture. Currently, Pacific Bell employees number over 67,000. Eighty-five percent of the employees who will be on the payroll in the year 2000 are on the payroll today. Only a small percentage of the entire work force hold post-secondary degrees--a requisite level of education for a technologically oriented corporation.

The new corporate environment

Consistent with demographic studies by the U.S. Department of Labor, the Pacific Bell work force in the 21st century will continue to be much older. The employee of the 1990's and the 21st century requires a new set of knowledge and knowledge-acquisition skills. Because of the need for innovative and continued education, Telesis Management Institute was formed in 1985 with the mandate to provide educational directions, and to navigate the changes in corporate culture. One of four elements of Telesis Management Institute, Self-Directed Education, had the primary purpose to provide educational degree and certificate programs to employees on company premises and/or, if appropriate, to guide them to on-campus programs. Initially, therefore, Pacific Bell responded to change with the formation of an overall organizational structure specifically mandated to provide continuing education and training programs.

The educational approach of Pacific Bell

Central to Self-Directed Education is the concept of self-direction, i.e., employees empowered to choose from an array of education and training options to pursue their own continuing education goals. This concept is actualized through the following educational approach:

1. Educational degree programs focus on majors in the business and technical fields, including business administration, management, computer science, information systems, electrical engineering, and electronics technology.
2. Most on-company premises degree and certificate programs are offered to cohorts of at least 15 students committing to the entire program. Undergraduate degree programs are accelerated. On-campus programs are available at various college and university campuses.
3. The educational infrastructure includes an array of interconnected programs that move across the spectrum to include remedial "Gateways", A.A., A.S., B.A., B.S., through graduate degrees including distance education MS degrees from Stanford University and National Technological University.
4. Employees identify their career and professional goals, then link them with the appropriate educational program. Knowledge and skills obtained through these educational programs are continuously demonstrated in the work environment.
5. Tuition aid is available for employees enrolling in programs which are directly business related and relevant to their specific work. Educational

expenses including tuition, books, registration fees, and application fees are reimbursed 100% to employees after successful completion of the course. As of December 1989, all undergraduate degree programs regardless of major are funded.

6. The education degree and certificate programs are open to all employees.

Organizational Strategies As Responses to Change

In addition to the formation of an organization mandated within the corporation to provide education opportunities for employees, innovative programs were created. Some of the programs included accelerated undergraduate degree programs offered on company premises and a pre-college gateway program.

1. *Accelerated degree programs offered on company premises*

Since 1985 when 142 employees attended classes first offered at 4 high employee density corporate locations across the state (San Francisco, Sacramento, Los Angeles, and San Ramon), the program has expanded rapidly in early 1990 with more than 2000 students enrolled at more than 40 company locations in more than 25 cities throughout California. In Fall 1987, all undergraduate Associate of Arts/Sciences and upper division Bachelor's of Arts/Sciences programs offered on company premises were accelerated. The major concept of the approach was that an employee could start the program with a high school diploma, progress through the curriculum over the next two years, and complete all requirements for the AA/AS degree in two years. This time frame was equivalent to the length of time full-time students spent

obtaining their AA/AS degree. These programs were designed by Pacific Bell and delivered by community colleges and universities in California.

Initially, it was difficult for Pacific Bell to convince community colleges of the academic soundness of this program. The accelerated degree program differed significantly from the traditional on-campus schedule that was largely designed for and geared towards 18- to 20-year-old students. Using some of the features of accelerated upper division Bachelor's programs offered by local private universities in California and focusing on the needs and motivations of the adult learner (average age 40 and older), the accelerated AA/AS degree program is now in its third year with more than 1400 students.

The program is offered to a cohort of a minimum of 15 students who commit to the entire degree program. They begin the program together, proceed in a lock-step manner throughout the program, and then graduate together. These programs begin whenever there is demand. These programs proceed over an accelerated schedule, usually 30 to 36 months for an AA/AS degree and 16 to 18 months for an upper division Bachelor's degree.

In creating the accelerated AA/AS degree program with many community colleges, other innovations were also created including an educational blueprint and the sequencing of classes into a specified cluster model. The blueprint and cluster model are now standard features of the accelerated on-company premises programs.

An *educational blueprint* identifies the entire curriculum and schedule up front for student commitment. This is a significant departure from the standard college catalog of course listings. The blueprint includes all courses necessary for the degree program with their start and end dates; the history,

educational philosophy, and educational goals of the providing college or university; course descriptions; program objectives and linkages among courses; company-related training courses; and resources from the company and the college or university.

The *cluster model* was created because students frequently reported they did not understand why they had to take certain general education requirements or how these courses were related to each other. The cluster model is based on the recommendations of Ernest Boyer, former U.S. Commissioner of Education, in his book, *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America*. The cluster model places the courses in related knowledge areas or clusters. For an Associate of Arts degree in business administration, clusters include language and rationality; technology and economics; culture, behavior, and institutions; commercial law and finance; and the natural sciences. Courses are organized in the appropriate cluster.

2. *Gateway program*

When community colleges began offering the accelerated AA/AS degree program for Pacific Bell employees, the initial class in the program ranged from U.S. History to Business Communications, and the final class was often Intermediate Algebra or Managerial Accounting. Students with high math anxiety and low confidence in English composition skills either avoided math classes and/or performed poorly in classes which required extensive writing assignments. It became evident that many students needed to begin with math and English coursework. The gateway program was therefore designed as a strong foundation in math and English skills at the pre-college level and considered critical to the success of students in other courses in the degree

program. Additionally, a guidance seminar describing the overall college experience and options for the major is provided. Cohorts complete their math courses from Math Review through Intermediate Algebra and their English review courses delivered an accelerated schedule. Before proceeding to the rest of the AA degree program, they identify the upper division Bachelor's degree program. Both community college and university develop an articulation agreement so that the entire undergraduate degree program is clarified.

Communication Strategies As Responses to Change

Several communication strategies are employed to communicate educational opportunities by which the employees can build the requisite knowledge and skills in the changing environment. Currently, the majority of Pacific Bell employees are typically targeting to enter either the gateway program or the accelerated degree program.

1. *Educational consulting on an interpersonal basis*

Self-Directed Education provides educational consulting on a one-to-one or interpersonal basis either by phone or in individual appointments. These interpersonal exchanges focus on the employee's alignment of career and professional goals with his/her educational goals. Because most employees are returning to college, re-entry issues such as how to begin the program and the nature of a college experience are typically discussed. On-campus and on-company premises programs are compared. From these initial discussions, goals and strategies for beginning the appropriate educational program are identified.

2. *Performance development discussion between employee and supervisor*

The employee must gain approval for the company's tuition aid program before beginning an on-campus or on-company premises program. The employee and supervisor discuss, usually on a quarterly basis, the career goals of the employee. In this interpersonal interaction, the supervisor acts as a "coach" and facilitates the development of the employee's professional expertise. The two will negotiate on projects to be completed during the year and the necessary education and training options to complete the projects. The educational blueprint prepared by Self-Directed Education and the providing college or university is discussed extensively for program objectives and their application to the immediate work environment. Once agreement has been reached about the educational program, the employee may begin that program.

3. *Cohort dynamics*

If an employee participates in an on-company premises program, he/she will proceed through the entire program with the same cohort members. The cohort usually consists of 15 to 25 students. Over the ensuing 2 1/2 years for the accelerated AA/AS degree, students and instructors have reported on group cohesiveness and camaraderie that develop. As a dynamic small group, cohort members engage in the learning process together. They meet frequently outside the classroom to exchange study notes and to work cooperatively on group assignments. If students miss classes due to business meetings, fellow students provide them with notes. The instructor also assists in helping cohort members work together as a team. Because cohorts usually consist of many levels of management and the focus in classes is on cooperation, many students are able to network among co-workers about common projects, learn about different

aspects of the business, and experience the team approach necessary to perform many interdisciplinary work-related projects.

4. *Collaboration among the corporation, colleges, and universities*

On a daily basis, the Self-Directed Education staff administers various programs at all degree levels offered on company premises throughout the state of California. Design, implementation, and evaluation of these programs occur through negotiated, persuasive interactions between Self-Directed Education staff and school administrators to create the programs, and between instructors and students to achieve the specified learning objectives. Through these interactions, information about academic goals and corporate goals is exchanged on an ongoing basis.

Essential to the creation and delivery of continuing education programs is a dynamic collaboration beween the corporation, and colleges and universities as education providers. This fourth major communication strategy as a response to change has many implications. The traditional relationship between colleges/universities and students has become transformed as corporations have acknowledged the need for continuing education, and more adult learners have returned to the academic environment to acquire new knowledge and skills. Corporations are actively collaborating with colleges and universities to create new programs specifically geared for the adult learner. Largely because of the success of this collaboration and the continuing need to provide programs adapted to the adult learner, Pacific Bell is currently working with several private universities to construct an accelerated 4-year undergraduate degree program to be offered in 1990 on company premises to employees.

This collaboration has the following implications:

1. The corporation is acknowledged as a legitimate designer and collaborator of educational degree programs.
2. The traditional separation between theory and practice is being bridged by the creative integration of academic coursework and corporate training.
3. Academic faculty have greater opportunities to discuss, explore, and experience applications of knowledge by interacting with students in corporate environments.
4. Adult learners in a corporate environment have greater opportunities for dialogue with and discipline in academic disciplines.
5. Greater understanding of the overall curriulum and clearer identification of the underlying linkages among disciplines, ways of thinking, and ways of knowing are more possible with the provision of educational blueprints.

Summary and Conclusions

The establishment of these organizational strategies and the employment of corresponding communication strategies have resulted in program expansion on company premises from 800 enrollments in fall 1987 to 2000 enrollments in spring 1990. In the many strategies utilized, employees are now able to realize their continuing education goals. To meet the reality of change, these strategies have meant that employees may now bring what they have learned in the classroom back to the work environment, thereby increasing their own capability and bringing new skills and knowledge to the corporation. Concurrently, colleges and universities are able to enrich their academic environment with experiences in and knowledge about corporate culture and

goals. The resulting dynamic interactions among corporations, colleges, and universities as illustrated in this case study have impacted the nature of those collaborations, creating new strategies to respond constructively to change.

REFERENCES

Beutel, C., and M. Go (1989). "Strategic Education: Distance Learning for Business Needs." Paper presented to the Fifth Annual Conference on Teaching at a Distance, Madison, Wisconsin.

Boyer, E. (1987). College: the Undergraduate Experience in America. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.

Bridges, W. (1988). Surviving Corporte Transition. New York: Doubleday.

Go, M.J., C. Beutel, and M. Carey (1989). "Strategic Education for the Adult Learner: Accelerated Degree Programs in Corporate Settings." Paper presented to the Quality in Off-Campus Programs Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Johnston, W.B. (1987). Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the 21st Century, [Executive Summary]. Indianapolis: Hudson Institute Report.

Opportunity 2000: Creative Affirmative Action Strategies for a Changing Workforce (1988). Prepared for Employment Standards Administration, U.S. Department of Labor. Indianapolis: Hudson Institute Report.